

APPENDIX B (WEDDINGS) TO JRTC & Fort Polk CHAPEL STANDING OPERATING PROCEDURES

1. **PURPOSE:** To provide guidance, assign responsibility, and establish eligibility and procedures for conducting wedding ceremonies at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

2. **SCOPE:** All personnel, both military and civilian, involved in wedding ceremonies at Fort Polk, Louisiana.

3. **REFERENCES:**

a. AR 165-1, Chaplain Activities in the U.S. Army, dated February 1998.

b. Information Paper, DACH-IMR, JAN 99, Subject: Fees Charged for Military Chapel Services.

c. Information Paper, DACH-IMR, JAN 99, Subject: Use of Military Chapel Facilities.

d. Memorandum, HQDA Office of the Judge Advocate General, DAJA-AL, 1994/0732, 8 June 1994, Subject: Fees Charged for Weddings Performed in Military Chapels.

e. AR 600-20, Army Command Policy, Total Army Family (TAF).

3. **Eligibility:** To reserve a chapel for a wedding, either the bride or groom must be active duty Army, an Army family member with a valid ID card, a military retiree, or a retiree's family member with valid ID card. All exceptions to this requirement must be approved by the command chaplain.

4. **Procedures for Reserving a Chapel.** Everyone fulfilling the requirements for eligibility must make application in writing and in person. No telephone reservations will be accepted. All parties desiring to use the chapel will use the attached wedding reservation form. This form must be completed and submitted in person to a chapel staff member to be logged in. Any change to the application form must be made in writing by completing a new form. No changes will be made over the telephone. At this point, it is wise to write down the date and time, name and phone number of the person to whom you gave the request. Use of the chapel is not guaranteed until confirmation by senior chapel staff. Do not assume that reservations are confirmed just because a request for the chapel has been submitted. If you are not contacted for confirmation after three days, please contact the chapel for confirmation by calling 531-2669. Public announcements of the wedding date (including invitations) should not be made until final scheduling is approved. Please check with the NCOIC of the chapel before any formal invitations are sent.

5. **Responsibilities.** Active and reserve component chaplains sponsor all weddings performed in Fort Polk chapels. Chaplains use denominational beliefs, regulations, and conscience to determine if they will perform a wedding ceremony.

a. **Wedding Couples.**

(1) Attend the premarital class at the Fort Polk Family Life Center, Bldg 515. Fort Polk chapels may not be reserved until the couple receives a certificate of class completion from the Family Life Chaplain. This class is held once a month. To reserve your place in the class, call 531-6816.

(2) Request support for your wedding ceremony from your sponsoring chaplain. It is required that all arrangements of weddings or rehearsals be made through the unit (sponsoring) chaplain or person performing the ceremony. The chaplain or person officiating must closely coordinate the ceremony with the chapel NCOIC as to time and date, and both must ensure that there are no conflicts with religious services or other scheduled events.

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(3) Secure a chaplain/clergy member to perform the wedding. A chaplain is a clergy person, that is, a minister, priest, rabbi, or imam. Each chaplain has been ordained and endorsed for military ministry by a particular religious group, each with its own traditions and requirements. Both clergy and civilian magistrates are authorized to perform weddings. However, there is a difference. Magistrates will perform civil weddings when presented with a valid marriage license. When a chaplain officiates, the wedding is a religious ceremony. A chaplain cannot be required to perform a wedding.

(4) Contract any desired services, i.e. civilian clergy, florist, musician(s), photographer, etc.

(5) Print own bulletins or invitations (after confirmation in writing of date and time).

(6) Clean the chapel after the ceremony. The couple must designate at least two people to clean and to be responsible for returning the chapel to its original state. This is not the responsibility of the chaplain assistant.

(7) If civilian clergy is used, the name and phone number of the clergy member must be entered on the reservation request form.

(8) Ensure activities (to include set-up, take down, and clean up) do not exceed the two and one half hour time limit.

b. **Civilian Clergy.** Civilian clergy may officiate at weddings at Fort Polk chapels when a pastoral relationship exists between the minister and one or both of the persons being married. Weddings must conform to the state laws of Louisiana and ecclesiastical requirements, if applicable. The marriage license must be turned over to the person officiating no later than the time of the rehearsal. The civilian minister must:

(1) Supply proof of license to perform weddings. A copy of the ordination certificate is sufficient. Send it to the Command Chaplain's Office, Fort Polk, LA 71459.

(2) Must be sponsored by an Army chaplain. The sponsoring chaplain will sign the request for use of chapel facilities and serve as consultant to the civilian clergy.

(3) Conduct the ceremony and follow up by ensuring the documentation is signed and registered with the parish issuing the marriage license.

c. **Chapel Staff Hosting the Wedding.**

(1) Weddings are scheduled on weekdays during business hours or on Saturdays before 1500 hours. . No weddings will be scheduled on Sundays or federal holidays. Rehearsals are normally held on the day prior to the wedding.

(2) Weddings are scheduled on Saturdays only on a first come, first served basis during the periods of 1130-1300 or 1330-1600 hours. The exact hours of weddings and rehearsals are determined by chapel availability. Each wedding party is allotted two and one half hours for setup, dressing, ceremony, and cleanup. Rehearsals will be held on Fridays only between 1600-1700 or 1700-1800 hours. One hour will be allotted for rehearsal. If more time is needed, arrangements will be made with the Chapel NCOIC prior to the event.

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- (3) Scheduled worship or chapel activities take priority over weddings.

Note: Applications are approved and entered on the chapel calendar once they are signed by the officiating/sponsoring chaplain, a certificate of premarital class completion is turned in and the date is confirmed by the chapel OIC.

d. Sponsoring Chaplains.

- (1) Active and reserve component chaplains sponsor all weddings performed at Fort Polk chapels.
- (2) If a chaplain cannot perform a wedding for an active duty soldier from his/her unit, he/she will assist in finding a chaplain/clergy member to provide for the needs of the couple.
- (3) Active duty military chaplains may sponsor civilian clergy to perform a wedding ceremony. The Command Chaplain must approve civilian clergy. The sponsoring chaplain and/or the chaplain assistant must be present at the rehearsal and wedding in order to assume responsibility for the chapel.
- (4) The chaplain coordinates with the chapel, signs the ceremony request, and provides his/her chaplain assistant to support the rehearsal and wedding ceremony.
- (5) National Guard/Reserve component chaplains perform weddings under the sponsorship of the chapel. The Guard/Reserve component chaplain must make arrangements for a chaplain assistant to be provided.

e. Chaplain Assistants.

- (1) Answer any questions concerning the reservation of the chapel.
- (2) Open the chapel for the ceremony.
- (3) Secure the chapel after the ceremony.
- (4) Supervise the two individuals named by the wedding party to clean and restore the chapel. The chaplain assistant will inspect the chapel to ensure its cleanliness.

f. Command Chaplain. Approves exceptions to this policy.

g. Family Life Chaplain. All personnel married in a Fort Polk chapel must attend premarital counseling prior to the wedding ceremony. The Family Life Chaplain provides a mandatory premarital counseling session at the Family Life Center to all personnel planning to be married in a Fort Polk chapel. The chaplain/civilian clergy member performing the wedding may require additional premarital counseling to meet his/her denominational requirements.

6. Roman Catholic Wedding.

a. Marriage in the Catholic Church is a matter of jurisdiction. Active duty soldiers and their families come under the jurisdiction of the Archdiocese for the Military Services; and are therefore permitted to be married on a military installation. The jurisdiction is personal. Personal jurisdiction over any active duty soldier and his/her family wherever they reside in the United States or overseas; and whether they live on

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or off a military installation. Therefore, all Catholic soldiers and their family members are authorized to be married by a Catholic chaplain provides all the prescriptions of the Catholic Church have been met.

b. The Catholic chaplain loses his jurisdiction over soldiers and their family members once they retire from active military service. This means that the Catholic Chaplain no longer has personal jurisdiction over soldiers and their families. The retired soldier and family will then come under the Territorial Jurisdiction of the local Archbishop or Bishop. The local pastor within whose boundaries the retired soldier and his/her family resides has jurisdiction over that family for religious purposes. Weddings and other sacramental administrations become the prerogatives of the local pastor, by Church Law. Therefore, by law the local military Catholic chaplain is not your proper pastor and does not have the proper authority to assist at the weddings of retired personnel and their families. This is true even though you happen to attend Mass at a local military installation.

c. Personnel assigned to units without a chaplain will be provided coverage from the area coverage plan. If the chaplain is from a non-compatible denomination, every effort will be made to ensure appropriate coverage is provided.

7. Jewish Weddings. The Post Jewish program is exempted from provision of this policy, which do not apply to Jewish practices.

8. General information.

- a. It is the responsibility of the wedding couple to contract for the musician(s) they desire.
- b. Only approved chapel musicians may play organs and electronic instruments. A list of approved musicians is available from the chapel. Fees must be negotiated with the musician.
- c. Chapel facilities are not available for wedding receptions. Any exception to this policy will be made by the Command Chaplain.
- d. Rice, birdseed, real flower petals, confetti, silly string or similar materials are not allowed inside or outside of the chapel facilities. Silk rose petals may be used inside the chapel. Bubbles may be used outside of the chapel.
- e. Candles. The wedding party shall provide all candles, including the unity candle, if desired. Candles must be 51% beeswax. Plastic runners must be placed beneath the candelabras.
- f. Non-religious or civil wedding ceremonies will not be held in any Fort Polk Chapel. Justice of the Peace or a civilian magistrate may not perform weddings in the chapels.
- g. Chaplain assistants are the only authorized personnel to instruct others to operate the chapel audio system. No external equipment (tape or CD players, etc.) will be connected to the chapel audio system.
- h. Furniture items may be moved with the permission of the chapel NCOIC and under the supervision of the chaplain assistant. These items must be returned to their previous location after the wedding. Seasonal chapel decorations will not be removed.
- i. Chaplains and chaplain assistants do not accept payment for their official services. The wedding party may contribute to the Fort Polk Consolidated Chaplains' Fund.

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j. Wedding party members will not bring alcoholic beverages or other intoxicating materials to the chapel.

k. Use of tape of any kind (masking, scotch, or duct tape) on chapel altar, pews, pulpit, rails, lectern or chapel furniture is prohibited.

l. Many pastors feel that picture flashes distract from the service. Applicants will instruct the photographer to consult with the officiating chaplain prior to the wedding ceremony as to when, where, and what photographs may be taken.

m. Securing of sabers is the responsibility of the wedding party. Use of sabers will be in strict accordance with the "Manual of Sabers." Sabers for weddings are available at the Protocol Office. The Protocol Office can be reached at 531-1241.. The Protocol Office determines the policy on signing out and controlling sabers.